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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY (b) (1) (b) (3)

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Biographic Register

STRAUSS, Franz Josef — FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

Minister of Defense

Franz Josef Strauss, Germany's [redacted] Minister of Defense, is regarded as a possible future chancellor of the Republic, not, perhaps, in the immediate future, but at a time when the political climate is more favorable to a candidate of Strauss's pronounced nationalist tendencies. The combination of his own driving personal ambition and his country's increasing national assertiveness has given rise to some disquiet both within and outside Germany. [redacted] seem to incline him toward conservatism in domestic affairs and possibly for the same reason he has always been a supporter of a "hard" policy toward the Soviet Union.

Born in Munich on September 6, 1915, the son of a butcher in modest circumstances, Strauss was working on his doctoral thesis at the University of Munich when he was drafted into the German Army in 1939. Commissioned early in 1942, he served in France, Poland, and Russia. After suffering severely from frostbite at Stalingrad he was sent back to Germany and ended the war at an anti-aircraft school at Schongau in his native Bavaria.

In 1945 Strauss was appointed deputy commissioner at Schongau by American military government authorities. Shortly thereafter he joined the Christian Social Union and began to build up a political following in Bavaria. Elected to the Bundestag in 1949, he was named Minister for Special Duties in 1952, Minister for Atomic Affairs in 1955, and Minister of Defense in 1956.

Strauss has been the subject of bitter criticism, [redacted] He is, nevertheless, considered to be not only one of the ablest and most dynamic members of the present cabinet but also a talented politician who can be expected to play a significant role on the national scene for many years to come.

In 1957 Strauss was married to the former Marianne Zwicknagel, daughter of a Bavarian brewer. He speaks English well.

July 1961

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